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# RSEP Team Voyages to Brazil

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## RSEP Team Voyages to Brazil

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Article by Kate Lamar, Photos by Lt. Col. Keith Blakely

Posted March 22, 2010



Professors with the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) Regional Security Education Program (RSEP) returned from Brazil in February where they had boarded the USS Carl Vinson for three days to provide regional security education to the crew.

The RSEP faculty, which included Prof. Kristina Mani of Oberlin College, Prof. David Mares of the University of California, San Diego and Lt. Col. Keith Blakely of NPS, boarded the ship by plane while it was traveling along the coast of Brazil between Natal and Rio De Janeiro.

"The RSEP experience is unique and especially rewarding because you live with a crew and get a small sense of the diverse range of activities our Navy perform," said Mares, who has been involved with three previous RSEP deployments.

Onboard the USS Carl Vinson, the RSEP team was greeted by Rear Adm. Ted Branch, Commander of Carrier Strike Group One, who encouraged the RSEP team to reach out to his entire crew.

"Admiral Branch wanted to insure that all briefs were as balanced as possible between the educational value of historical and political background as well as of practical training benefit to the average sailor that would be interacting with counterparts from South American militaries," said Blakely.

"It was obvious to me that sailors at every rank wanted to have, not only a clearer understanding of the countries they were going to be working with, but also a solid basis for building more productive partnerships with their Latin American peers," Mani said. "The U.S. and Latin America have many shared interests - from deepening democracy to insuring national and citizens' security - so it's really important to approach the relationship from the perspective of partners who can learn from and listen to each other."

The RSEP program focuses on educating the entire crew or deployed force, recognizing that officers and enlisted alike interact with the local communities and partner militaries.

"Since every U.S. Sailor, from admiral to enlisted crewman, interacts with citizens and sailors of these other countries, it's important for them to demonstrate a sensitivity and appreciation for their national experiences," said Mares. "This ability doesn't just help us avoid misunderstandings and incidents; it's the only way to build partnerships."

Blakely estimates the RSEP team directly reached out to around 600 crewmembers, and expects many more will see recordings of the presentations that are set to run on the ship's television station. The presentations will air on the USS Bunker Hill as well.

The RSEP program started in 2000 after the USS Cole bombing in Yemen. It was recognized that Navy personnel would benefit from understanding the culture, region and potential security threats in the areas where their vessels were operating, said Navy Capt. Mark Huber, Associate Dean of the NPS School of International Graduate Studies and RSEP program manager.

